



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The Honorable Jason E. Glass
Director of Education
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Director Glass:

Thank you for your letter of May 30, 2012 to Michael Yudin regarding Iowa's ESEA flexibility request. We appreciate the information you provided regarding the challenge the Iowa Department of Education faces in developing and implementing teacher and leader evaluation and support systems that would meet the principles of ESEA flexibility.

As referenced in your letter, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) provided guidance to State educational agencies (SEAs) explaining that, in order to meet the principles of ESEA flexibility, an SEA must develop and adopt guidelines for teacher and leader evaluation and support systems that:

- Will be used for continual improvement of instruction;
- Meaningfully differentiate performance using at least three performance levels;
- Use multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth for all students (including English Learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous teacher performance standards, teacher portfolios, and student and parent surveys);
- Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis;
- Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs and guides professional development; and
- Will be used to inform personnel decisions.

In its request for ESEA flexibility, an SEA must provide the guidelines it has developed and adopted, or a plan to develop and adopt those guidelines, and ensure that each local educational agency (LEA) in the State develops and implements teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA's guidelines. This includes ensuring that LEA evaluation and

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support systems take into account data on student growth in a significant way to determine teacher and principal performance levels.

According to the information in your request, the Iowa Department of Education does not currently have authority to ensure implementation of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with this principle of ESEA flexibility. Because of these constraints, the Department is not able to approve Iowa's request for flexibility at this time.

Please be assured that we would like to continue working with Iowa in support of your efforts to increase the quality of instruction and improve student academic achievement. Further, I'd like to commend you and your team on the work that has been done to develop high-quality plans to transition to college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments, as well as to develop a differentiated recognition, accountability and support system that holds strong promise to improve student achievement.

As Iowa continues to move forward with important educational reforms, we stand ready to be a partner and to provide support. Best wishes in your continued quest to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle

cc: Kevin Fangman, Deputy Director, Iowa Department of Education
Wilma Gajdel, Title I Administrative Consultant, Iowa Department of Education